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ARMYDIVE

Army Engineers take on Dangerous Dive Mission in New Mexico

SANTA ROSA, N.M. - As many as 23 divers from the 511th Engineer "Dive" Team from Fort Eustis, Virginia are removing sediment and rock from Santa Rosa's Blue Hole to retard erosion, open a natural spring and improve visibility and safety for recreational divers.

The mission is considered dangerous due to the depth and the time spent underwater working with massive pieces of equipment.

"The work that is being done is to protect the integrity of Blue Hole Lake and is helping the ecosystem as well as improving recreation," said Tim Dodge, City Administrator of Santa Rosa. "I think these guys are doing a great job." Ever since they started last year to remove sediment, we have noticed big improvements.

Though the divers will operate at an actual depth of 80 feet below the water's surface, Blue Hole is 5,100 feet above sea level, equating to a more dangerous operating depth of approximately 110 feet. This particular mission began May 31 and will be completed June 29, a caveat to a similar mission that took place at Blue Hole last year.

The Blue Hole is the portal for artesian flows. Beneath the Blue Hole is another cavern access by a small entrance at the bottom of the lake. For safety, access to the caves was blocked by dumping an immense amount of sediment and rock.

The artesian flows found an alternate path and began to erode the walls of the Blue Hole. Removing the debris will help stabilize the bank of the Blue Hole and maintain free flow of the natural spring.

